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Woman's League for the
Protection of Riverside...

“Beside the still waters”

[New York]

[1916?]

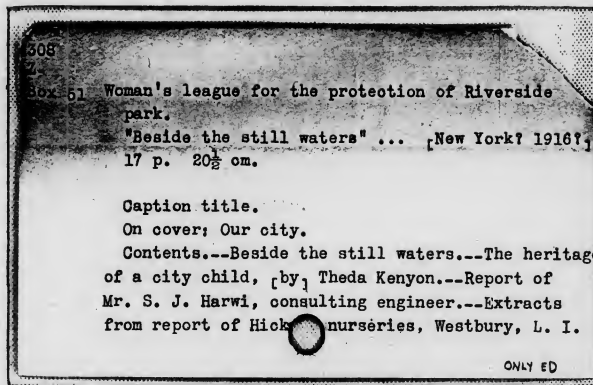
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OUR CITY

**"Men did not love Rome because
she was great. She was great
because they had loved her"**

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June 29, 1917 AET

LET us suppose," says Gilbert Chesterton, in words which I have quoted once before, "let us suppose we are confronted with a desperate thing—say Pimlico." (and Pimlico, I take it, is comparable to our West Hoboken or Hunter's Point.) It is not enough for a man to disapprove of Pimlico; in that case he will either cut his throat or move to Chelsea. Nor, certainly, is it enough for a man to approve of Pimlico, for then it will remain Pimlico—which would be awful! The only way out of it seems to be for somebody to love Pimlico, to love it with a transcendental tie and without any earthly reason. If there arose a man who loved Pimlico, then Pimlico would rise into ivory towers and golden pinnacles; Pimlico would attire herself as a woman does when she is loved. If men loved Pimlico as mothers loved their children, arbitrarily, because she is theirs, Pimlico, in a year or two, might be fairer than Florence. This, as a fact, is how cities did grow great. People first paid honor to some honored spot and afterward gained glory for it. "*Men* did not love Rome because she was great. She was great because they had loved *her*."

HERBERT SHIPMAN.

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"BESIDE THE STILL WATERS"

HERE is there such a place about New York? With four hundred miles of water front, our city of New York has only reserved five miles for park purposes—but this five miles—Riverside Park—is a triumph of landscape architecture, so great that many think it a bit of natural woodland which has escaped the ravages of a growing city.

Unfortunately, at the foot of its sloping lawns and charmingly graded dells lies the railroad; while the outer section, along the water's edge, from lack of funds, has never been developed. Thus it is not always realized that this outer section, with the land under water, is park property and that as such the railroad has no rights to further extension therein. Civic pride should demand the removal of dumps and coal pockets now within its confines and insist on the development *along this water's edge* of playgrounds, swimming pools, ball fields and a basin for small yachts.

The present proposed plans call for a blasting away of one-half the acreage of the developed part of this park, which will give the citizens a miniature Panama Canal throughout its entire length, during the period of reconstruction. Reflection on any city work, such as the subways, the approaches to Manhattan Bridge, or anything awaiting completion or restoration, will show how long this reconstruction period will last.

If there has never been money enough to develop the outer section by the water's edge, how can we expect appropriations for the immense reconstruction following the blasting away of so large an area? The \$300,000 to be given by the railroad company will not pay for the filling-in process alone, and the lovely sloping lawns to the water's edge, shown by the model, are only possibilities of **what might happen if the city ever had the money to spend.**

During the construction period various "nuisances" would

have increased within the park district and along the river front, which citizens would find greater difficulty in having removed than the "nuisances" already there. Two very important and serious conditions are to be permanent. At 135th Street there is to be an open, uncovered freight yard of thirty-odd tracks, with commercial docks at this point. Below 72d Street, in a section which now has the highest death rate in the city, there is to be a three-tier cattle runway extending 800 feet into the river. Mentally connect the two and add to the inevitable noise of shifting trains, the holding of cattle cars in this open freight yard, with all the nauseating odors. *This in the heart of a residential section.* The law now permits cattle in transportation to remain nearly two days without water and the pitiful cry of the suffering beast is even now a harrowing sound in one's ears. From the open freight yard, up through the proposed thirteen ventilating shafts in the park, and again from the open yard and cattle runway below 72d Street, will come the pestilential odors and the cry of the helpless beast. With increased facilities the railroad may move its live freight more quickly, but it will also increase the number and amount of such freight.

"The voice of Rachel weeping for her children" has been heard in our city this summer. Shall we not listen to that cry and learn a lesson? Let us emphasize the fact that there have been very few cases of infantile paralysis between the two parks—River-side and Central—in a section where **13,220 children are registered in the public schools.** What effect have trees and water, purifying the air, had on this epidemic?

"Every city in the world and especially European cities have seen to it that their water fronts are protected, because after all they are the legitimate playgrounds of the people. Those who come from our congested tenement districts find fresh air which is denied to them in their homes." This is true, for on torrid nights, when the more fortunate are in the country, the tenement mother with her babe seeks this little open place for rest, beside the

cool waters. How many lives have these noble trees saved, 1,800 of which are to be felled?

Quoting an expert of the Hicks Nurseries: "Many of these are magnificent spreading specimens which would take nearly a century to grow." He also tells how trees, thirty feet in height, which would be less than half the size of most of those to be destroyed, may grow in three feet of soil. However, with a flat concrete base and consequent lack of drainage, the best systems must be employed to prevent the roots from freezing or rotting. Also only with the most perfect system of irrigation could grass be grown on the steep river slope with exposure to the baking western sun. These smaller trees with their lack of shade would cost individually, according to variety, from \$80 to \$120 for purchase, transportation and planting.

Five thousand shrubs are to be sacrificed, which could be transplanted to other parks temporarily or even permanently. No provision has been made for this or for conserving the top soil, which is always costly. When one-half of the park area is considered, the waste, destruction and expense can be understood without figures, as can the almost hopelessness of reconstruction.

Mr. S. J. Harwi, consulting engineer, who has made a careful study of the park, model and proposed plans, calls attention to the clause printed on the plans: "The top of the roof may be raised or lowered." If it should be decided to raise the roof "sufficiently, perhaps, to permit at some future date some overhead tracks this feature (a flat terrace above the present park level) will be still more objectionable. The model shows large areas between 96th and 98th Streets, also between 78th and 82d Streets, from which it will not be possible to see the river or enjoy its breezes." "Granted that 'the improvement' is finished, what will it look like?" continues Mr. Harwi. "The city will have a disfigured park, resembling a fortification, and with a water front bounded by an embankment, which makes it practically inaccessible. It will have given away in perpetuity valuable rights belonging to the City. A

more reasonable solution, so far as the City of New York is concerned, would be to lower the tracks ten feet; to make the overhead room a minimum and to roof over the same. Thus the nature of the shore front would be established; no additional right of way in the park granted to the railroad company, for it would only lead to further and larger controversies at some future date. If it is commercially advantageous to the City for the railroad company to have more tracks within its borders, it can be accomplished without ruining any of its parks by means of tunnels."

We have quoted Mr. Harwi at length, because of the constructive elements in his report.

Everyone who studies the subject or makes a report points out the destruction to real estate values, but that is a more personal element, great, though it is. It is for the conservation of a much needed city park, the conservation and development of a beautiful place of recreation on the city shores of our greatest river—the gateway of America—that we plead.

The citizens of the Empire City should rise now to make real in their own land the visions of beauty they seek abroad.

"Our City," what vision do the words bring forth. One of joy, sadness or despair? Many who criticise New York conditions add: "I will welcome the end of the war, that I may live in a city beautiful, *abroad, anywhere*" would be surprised to attribute that feeling to despair—despair of bettering conditions in their own fair land. The task seems so Herculean as one sees ill-kept streets, unenforced ordinances and the hand of commercial greed despoiling ruthlessly. Civic pride seems hypnotized, remaining in a lethargy while the despoiler is at large. This state of mind was once considered the Americans' hopefulness, that somehow, some way, Providence would nullify the bad results of man's wilful mistakes. Thus has the average citizen accepted civic conditions and when "despair" has made itself *uncomfortably* felt has fled to where civic pride *actively* exists. Individually, work is done, magnificent work, for bettering conditions; but individually, many are distinctly to blame

for New York lying as "Prometheus bound" in the mighty grip of commercial greed. Or if, like Rip Van Winkle, he sleeps, his dreams are of commercial conquest; legitimate, fair, but the individual must realize that he "cannot live by bread alone," *the bread of materialism*. Especially is this true when he seeks in other lands the beauty and inspiration lacking in his own city.

Civic pride saved the Palisades, but New Yorkers collectively, residents of the Empire City of the Empire State, supinely yield to continued destruction, rather than rising in their might and saying: "Commercially we shall be great, but not at the sacrifice of the things and *principles* which would make 'Our City' a glory to the land of which it is the gateway." For the humanitarian side, we can make no better appeal than to quote the following: "Ain't it grand? It's country!" cried the little ragamuffin. That is what our parks mean to the little ones. Here are we, writing books and thrashing over and over the questions of preparedness, assimilation and Americanism, but would destroy one of the city's crown jewels, Riverside Park—or the ragged baby's Heaven. That is no exaggeration, for one is always uplifted by a bright, blue sky from which perhaps have come your babies' eyes. "Why destroy that which gives them a chance to play upon the green, to gaze upon the deep blue above and to develop strength in all senses? Why crowd them out of their heritage? Why produce infantile paralysis *of the mind* and foster future criminals, bred upon the smoke of a greedy railroad?" With this quotation we leave our appeal to the citizens of New York.

WOMAN'S LEAGUE FOR THE
PROTECTION OF RIVERSIDE PARK.

THE HERITAGE OF A CITY CHILD

I SAW her first half huddled on the steps
Of a wan tenement. Her scraggly arms
Twisted around the shapeless, dirty mass
That spoke her "little motherhood" too well.
Her wild, quick-moving eyes distrusted me
And all the world. Her rough hair fell like scars
Across her sagging shoulders, and her mouth
Hung open, lifeless, in the lurid heat,
* * * And then * * * I saw her under gracious trees,
Flat on her stomach on the bumpy ground,
Watching a family of eager ants
And funny, wriggly worms. A pop-eyed toad
Leered at her harmlessly. Her quick, wild eyes
Had caught the glimmer of a fairy wing
Shrined in a little flower, and bent-legged elves
Hid under mushrooms, and flat, brown-winged leaves—
* * * My dream broke as her doubting eyes met mine,
I knew the little, gentle, clever things
Would have to leave this sacred place of theirs.
I knew that smoke-veiled, blinded trains would spawn
Like pallid, creeping maggots in the night
Begotten of man's lust for naked trade,
Would drive the elves and birds—and her—away * * *
And she would slink back to the slime and sin
And dangerous squalor of that filthy street * * *
She would leave all her childhood's right—the glimpse
Of fairies—and perhaps—an angel's face * * *
With that dumb question on her stupid lips
And that distrust returned to her wide eyes. * * *

THEDA KENYON.

Dedicated to the Woman's League for the Protection of Riverside Park

REPORT OF S. J. HARWI CONSULTING ENGINEER

Dated August 7, 1916.

To the Woman's League for the Protection of Riverside Park.

LADIES:—Riverside Park is the most picturesque tract of land in New York City. It stands unique among city parks inasmuch as it fronts, for its entire length, on the historic Hudson River. Grant's Tomb, which occupies one of its commanding sites, has yearly become the mecca for thousands of people from far and near. The park has become one of the showplaces of the great metropolis and naturally all public-spirited citizens take a great pride in it.

Ever since this park has come into existence, commercial interests have ever been ready and willing to despoil it. This is evidenced by the coal pockets and garbage plants within its borders. No wonder New Yorkers have become apprehensive of any and all changes which in any way whatsoever will affect same.

The New York Central Railroad Company, whose tracks run through it, along the shore front, for its entire length, now wishes to enter into an agreement with the city of New York whereby it will get permission to encroach with its tracks on considerable park property. The changes called for on the plans for same are very extensive and it is the purpose of the writer, whose views you have sought in the matter, to point out some of them in so far as they will change the present appearance of the park.

The object of this proposed invasion of the park is to afford larger railroad facilities to the railroad company by means of additional tracks and the enlargement of its freight yard. The roof with which it is proposed to cover same for a distance of almost three miles will hide from view these larger railroad activities but forms no barrier to any possible further encroachment on the water front by the railroad. In fact the proposed new arrangement of the

tracks and the overhead clearances specified would seem to indicate that the plans were prepared with this object in view. Presumably the provision on plans "crossovers may be located in tunnels at any point required for railroad operation" has a direct bearing on the matter.

Attention is directed to the proposed increased width of the right of way from 72d to 129th Street, and more especially south of 76th Street where the additional new railroad yard is to be located.

On the plans it is stated that "the tunnel roof shall be designed to support the ground as shown by the plan, profile and sections. The top of the roof may be raised or lowered but shall be so constructed as to allow of placing the minimum depth of filling shown on sections."

The nature of the soil which is to form this covering is not specified. The roof will be designed to support "ground as shown on plans"—a maximum depth of three feet.

This is entirely inadequate, for it permits very little grading and, to cover the tracks, will necessitate a practically level terrace about one hundred feet wide, a considerable part of which will be above the present park level and will therefore obstruct the river view. If, as stated on plans, it should be decided to raise the roof, sufficiently perhaps to permit at some future date some overhead tracks, this feature would become still more objectionable.

The roof should be designed to carry at least ten feet of earth. It is practically impossible to have a lawn, with the amount of attention usually given to public parks, on a fill six inches in depth. No large trees which are an ornament to a park will thrive in soil three feet in depth.

The plans also specify that the sewers and pipes be extended to the outside slope over roof. From a sanitary point of view this condition would be intolerable. They should be extended into the river far enough to prevent any sewage from being washed to shore.

The railroad company wishes to acquire additional permanent easements from the city on a large tract of land, but will not relinquish any, and ostensibly is trying to acquire valuable privileges through the subterfuge of a would-be tunnel.

Were the city to grant the railroad the additional right of way asked for, and assuming that the natural slope of the ground on the easterly side of the railroad tracks will be the same as that proposed for the westerly side, over one-half of the park will be ruined during the period of construction. It will take several years to finish such an improvement and during all this time the park will be unsightly and will have to be closed to the public. Most of the trees, which it took years to grow, would have to be sacrificed.

A very ingeniously constructed model, purporting to show the finished improvement, is now exhibited at the Grand Central Station. It is pleasing to look at, especially so when by a stretch of the imagination we conceive many of the hollows easterly of the tunnel filled up as shown. It shows large areas between 96th and 98th Streets and also between 78th and 82d Streets, from which it will not be possible to see the river or to enjoy its breezes.

A lawn on a slope of one and a half to one with a westerly exposure and stately trees growing on a roof with six inches of soil are a novelty. Just why the thirteen ventilators have to extend about ten feet above the surface is not clear.

Of course, the plans which necessarily will be included and form a part of any agreement the city of New York may enter into with the New York Central Railroad Company do not show such novelties, and one must either consider them as an artist's fancy or that same were placed there to deceive the general public.

In the matter of restoring the park should it be decided upon to go ahead with this work the total cost of same, based on the cost of performing city work, would be approximately \$600,000, and for the payment of which only \$300,000 is available. This cost could be definitely determined by getting up the necessary plans and specifications and have reputable contractors bid on the work.

The least expensive way of doing this work would be for the railroad company to perform same under a bond sufficiently large to insure its proper performance.

Granted that the improvement is finished, what will it be like? The city will have a disfigured park, resembling a fortification, and with a water front bounded by an embankment which makes it practically inaccessible. It will have given away in perpetuity valuable rights now belonging to the city. When it becomes apparent that the city is indifferent as to the future of the park, property values in its neighborhood will begin to depreciate.

It seems to me that the Port and Terminal Committee has not given this park problem sufficient study. A more reasonable solution of this problem would be, so far as the city of New York is concerned, to lower the tracks ten feet; to make the overhead room a minimum, and to roof over same.

A conservative estimate of the cost of lowering the track system through the park, based upon the data at my disposal, is \$6,500,000. Compared with the assessed valuation of the park, this is a small amount and moreover it would effectually and permanently settle this long standing park problem. The nature of the shore front would be established.

No additional right of way in the park should be granted to the railroad company, for it would only lead to further and larger controversies at some future date.

If it is commercially advantageous to the city for the railroad company to have more tracks within its borders, it can be accomplished, without ruining any of its parks, by means of tunnels.

The whole matter should be referred to a Board of Engineers not connected with any of the city's political or railroad interests, for a careful study and a complete report before it is finally disposed of. It is a large problem which vitally affects the future of New York City.

Respectfully submitted,
(Signed) S. J. HARWI.

EXTRACTS FROM REPORT OF HICKS NURSERIES

I. HICKS & SON

Westbury, Long Island, N. Y.

Dated July 29, 1916.

To the Woman's League for the Protection of Riverside Park.

LADIES:—Our expert of this office has made a study of the model for the proposed changes in the New York Central Railroad along the Hudson, and has noted with particular interest how the changes will affect the beauty of Riverside Park from 72d Street to 129th Street.

After looking at the model, he went up to Riverside Park, and from his understanding of where the proposed track is to go, would say that many of the sloping lawns, knolls and vistas would be eliminated and stiff terraces and a broad flat deck with a covering of not more than three feet of top soil would take their place.

It would seem that the park is none too wide at present and by eliminating the many dales and hills the natural beauty of the park would be destroyed.

From our observation the big trees that are in the path of the proposed change are chiefly of the following varieties:

Acer platanoides.	Norway maple.
Acer dasycarpum.	Silver maple.
Fagus ferruginea.	American beech.
Catalpa speciosa and Ailanthus.	
Ulmus Americans.	American elm.
Ginkgo biloba.	Maidenhair tree.
Aesculus Hippocastanum.	Horse chestnut.
Gleditschia triacanthos.	Honey locust.

Robina pseudacacia.
Quercus velutian.
Quercus rubra.
Quercus palustris.
Liriodendron tulipifera.
Salix vitellina aurea.
Carolina and Lombardy poplars.
Liquidambar styraciflua.

Yellow locust.
Black oak.
Red oak.
Pin oak.
Tulip tree.
Golden-barked willow.
Sweet gum.

Many of these trees are immense, spreading specimens that would take nearly a century to grow.

Some of the larger trees can be moved, but some are so old and have the roots so intertwined with the rocks that it is not best to move them.

The approximate cost of a tree twenty-five feet high, five to six inches in diameter and twelve to sixteen feet spread would be about or between \$50 and \$80 delivered; to this must be added a planting charge which would average between \$20 and \$40. (Such a tree is half the size of most to be destroyed.)

As we understand it, approximately several hundred trees will have to be replaced. Should the proposed change be approved one can readily see that this will take more than the city can well appropriate. Evergreens of certain kinds can, no doubt, be grown.

The average depth to which the roots of a twenty-five-foot tree, five inches in diameter, would go is from three to four feet. A tree from fourteen to sixteen feet, three inches in diameter, would have roots that go from two to three feet. If the soil is deeper and fertile the roots will go much deeper. We examined the roots on the elms at 123d Street and Broadway and they went down eight feet deep in a trench blasted for a water main.

The kind of soil, water supply and climatic conditions are also important factors to be considered in deciding this question.

As we understand from the model, the varieties to be planted will be evergreens. No doubt trees twenty-five to thirty feet in height could be successfully grown, but it would cost considerable

to anchor them securely (against the high winds of winter), and then again the question of care and attention, proper drainage and irrigation would be brought up.

The objections to the concrete base would be from frost and improper drainage, the latter often causing the roots to decay and the tree to die.

In reference to the thirteen vents which are shown on the model with a planting of trees around each, this planting would be very well indeed provided that there is no smoke from locomotives.

Many small trees and shrubs that would be destroyed due to the excavations can be saved, if planted out elsewhere and replanted. (No provision is made for this—another example of extravagant and needless waste.)

As Riverside Park has a westerly slope, exposed to the full rays of the sun and also to the sweeping winter winds from the Hudson, it would appear that with a maximum of three feet of top soil the city would have to go to considerable expense in watering and manuring the soil on top of the deck. The best irrigation system possible would have to be installed, for it would require much care and attention to grow grass as now carpets the lawns of Riverside Park.

The subject of surface drainage should not be overlooked, for it is not a question of a few years that the residents of New York City should bear in mind, but the question of cool, ever valuable recreation grounds for her ever increasing population.

The question of large trees and whether or not they can be grown successfully in three feet of soil on top of the deck is a very difficult one. One thing is certain and that is it will be many years before the same comfortable shade that is given by the big oaks and maples that are now growing in Riverside Park can be enjoyed.

Good top soil is absolutely necessary. We would say that a definite delivered price can be secured from contractors in New

York City. (Has this been considered as part of proposed contract?)

Trees fifteen feet wide (again note, these are small trees, not much larger than shrubs) can be planted and made to grow vigorously in three feet of soil. But the conditions varying from normal would be that the deck, which would be a foot or more of concrete, makes the soil colder in winter and drier in summer. Irrigation will control the latter, but under normal the roots go down between the rocks and get food and moisture and the lower roots do not freeze.

WOMAN'S LEAGUE FOR THE PROTECTION
OF
RIVERSIDE PARK

ARTICLE II OF CONSTITUTION
OBJECT

"The object for which this League is formed is the protection of the territory included at this present time, 1916, in the area of Riverside Park, to keep it forever inviolate for the use of the public."

OFFICERS

President

MRS. CHARLES A. BRYAN

Treasurer

MISS GEORGIE WAYNE DAY

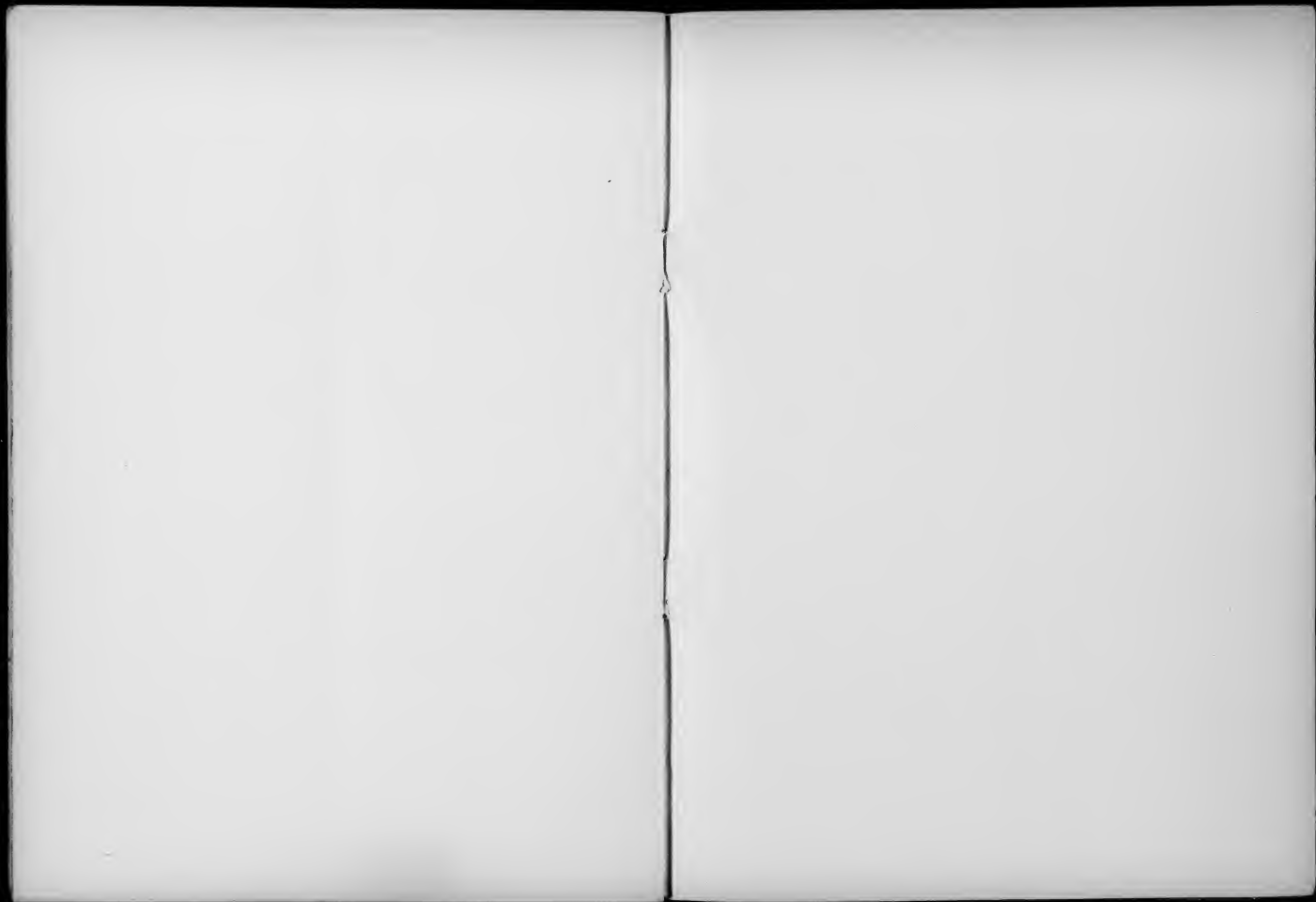
Executive Board

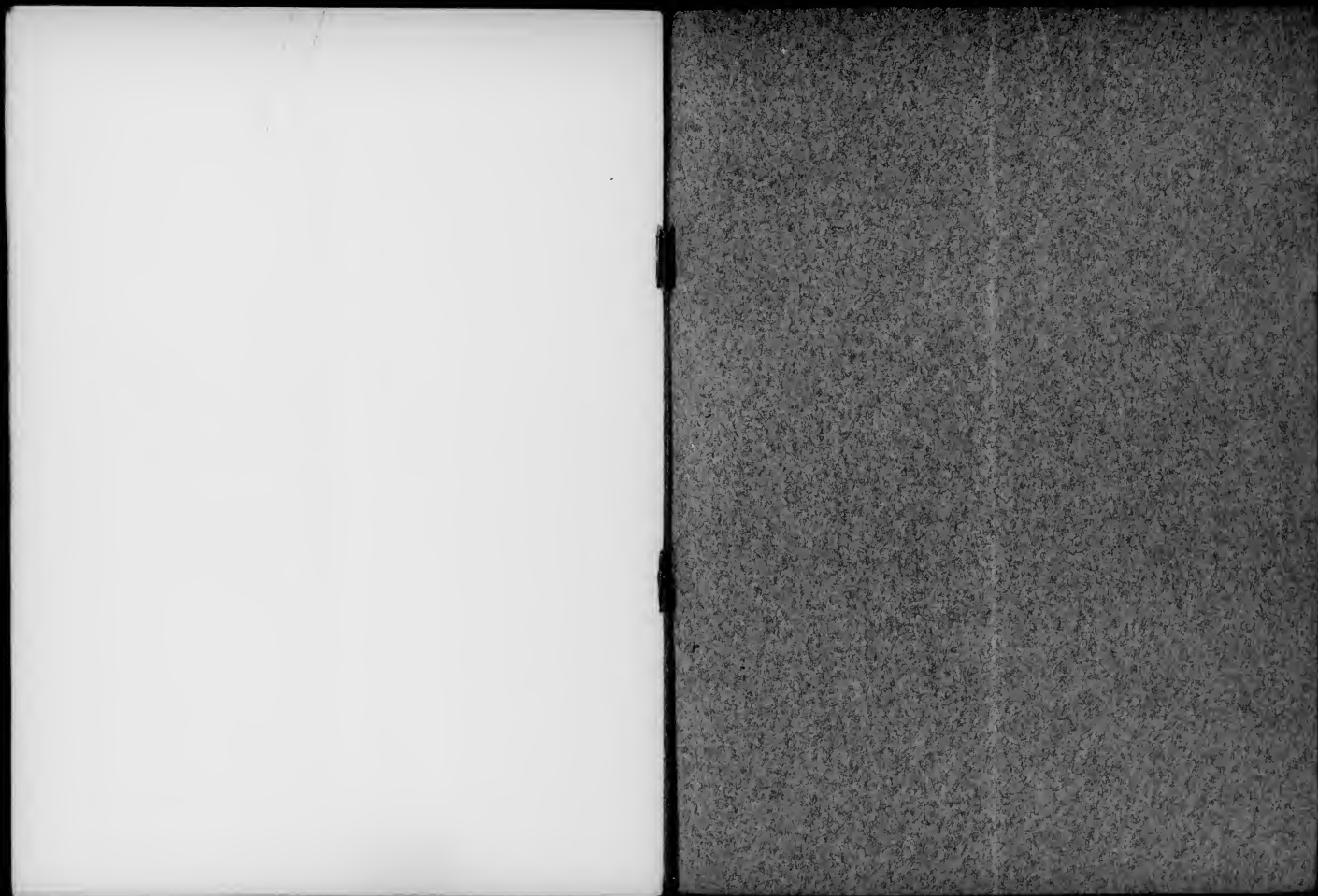
Mrs. James M. Stewart, Mrs. John Clapperton Kerr, Mrs. Arthur Melville Shady, Mrs. John C. Coleman, Mrs. William R. Stewart, Mrs. Henry A. Wise Wood, Mrs. Charles Griffin, Mrs. Jean Dwight Franklin, Mrs. Jacob W. Loeb, Mrs. Percy W. Boynton, Miss Dorsett, Miss Frances Peters, Mrs. Stephen Coles.

You can help us either by writing a letter of protest to the Mayor or by joining our League.

DUES, \$1.00

MISS GEORGIE WAYNE DAY, *Treasurer*
Greenwich, Conn.





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**END OF
TITLE**